



News Release

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SMOKE DETECTORS/BATTERY REPLACEMENT -- "IS YOURS WORKING?"

BATON ROUGE -- State Fire Marshal V. J. Bella is urging citizens of the State to inspect their smoke detectors and replace the old battery with a **NEW BATTERY** on or before the weekend of April 7, 2002, when Standard Time gives way to Daylight Savings Time.

"When the time changes, it's time to change the battery," stated Mr. Bella. A regular routine of battery maintenance is essential to the performance of smoke detectors. "Smoke detectors are the first line of defense against smoke and fire, however battery-powered detectors should have their batteries replaced at least twice a year to assure their proper operation. When it's time to change your clocks in the Spring and Fall, it's also a perfect time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors." Mr. Bella noted that approximately 90% of U.S. homes have at least one smoke detector, however these alarms are not always properly maintained, and therefore may not work in an emergency. **"There has been an increase over the past ten years of fires occurring in homes with non-functioning smoke detectors. This is a very disturbing trend,"** said Fire Marshal Bella.

When installing the new battery, Mr. Bella advised to use care in assuring that proper battery contact is made with the detector. He cautioned that in many cases the smoke detector will emit an alarm sound upon initial insertion of the battery, however unless both contacts of the battery are firmly installed, the detector will not function when needed. To ensure proper functioning, use the "test" circuitry of the detector immediately after installation of a new battery. If the detector fails to operate in the "test" mode, reinstall the battery making sure that both battery contacts are firmly in place, and then re-test.

"If the detector fails to operate properly, then it is time to replace it," said Mr. Bella. "Like most electrical devices, smoke detectors wear out. The average lifespan of a smoke detector is 8-10 years, after which it should be replaced. It is a good idea to write the purchase date on the detector with a marker so that you will know when it is time to replace it. Smoke detectors can now be purchased for as little as \$10 apiece. **This is indeed a small price to pay to protect the lives of your family."**

In addition to changing the batteries twice per year, Mr. Bella stressed that smoke detectors should be tested on a regular basis of at least once per month. He further advised that anytime your smoke detector produces intermittent "chirps" or similar alarm sound(s) when no smoke is present, it is telling you that the battery is low and should be replaced, regardless of the time of the year. **"Smoke detectors save lives,"** stated Mr. Bella. **"Is yours working?"**

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